

Melksham Rail User Group

Melksham
rail user group

Minutes

20th March 2019 at 19:30

Melksham Town Hall

Present

Peter Blackburn	<i>Chairman</i>	Sophie Martin	<i>TWC/C</i>
Paul Carter	<i>MWPC</i>	David Phillips	<i>WC</i>
Peter Chidley		Eddy Watts	
Graham Ellis	<i>Vice-Chair</i>	Adrienne Westbrook	<i>MTC</i>
John Glover	<i>MWPC</i>	Roger Witt	
John Hamley	<i>Secretary</i>		

Apologies

Geoff Elwell	<i>TWC/C</i>
Judith Gradwell	
Kevin Hayes	
Paul Johnson	
Horace Prickett	<i>WC</i>
Peter Tapscott	
Alan Whetherly	

1. Minutes of meeting 23rd January 2019

- Minutes were agreed - Proposed Eddy Watts, seconded Roger Witt.

2. Melksham station improvements

- A need has been identified to keep posters etc up to date.
 - GWR have been very proactive in advising of engineering works, but when the works are cancelled (so that trains can still run), revised information is not always displayed
- A loudspeaker, possibly remotely controlled from Chippenham or Westbury is desirable, to advise of a delay or cancellation, and provide guidance on alternatives.
- The TVM is invaluable but
 - is difficult to use in bright weather
 - offers overpriced tickets prior to the first off-peak train, not differentiating Off-Peak and Super-Off Peak.
 - Advice should be displayed describing what passengers should do when the ATM is not working.**
- Better taxi services are desirable perhaps with peak trains being met on a routine basis.
- Routing local buses through the station is desirable and will be promoted by MRUG in 2019.
- Hopefully MRUG will be able to 'adopt' the station, allowing us to undertake some basic duties, such as maintenance of the flower beds.
- During significant planned disruptions, MRUG would like to see a manned assistant to provide help to users. GWR have been unable to provide this due to the lack of 'welfare' facilities.
- The underpass to town could be promoted as it is a good facility. It could be used for community advertising etc.**
- There are proposals to route the 14/15 bus through the station, and the community bus could also be used to provide a station service.**

3. Melksham station community café etc and master plan

- TransWilts are progressing the conversion of the Reeds hut into a community café for travellers.
 - TWC/C now expect to operate the car park (using a contractor)**
 - Parking fees will be payable by card (not cash) and can be topped-up on departure (if a train is late etc). Charge levels are being determined. 100% of parking fees would be paid to TW, the contractor taking only penalty payments. Movements will be monitored by CCTV.**
 - Two payment machines will be provided. Clear advice to station car park users to ensure no unexpected fines is needed.**
 - There will be a 20 minute station-business no-charge facility. The area in front of the station will be for short term visitors only.**
 - There will also the ability to flag specific vehicles as acting on station business and not chargeable.**
 - Car park arrangements will include 4 electric charging points, which may require an upgraded incoming feeder to the site**
 - The car park layout depends on whether VW/Audi wish to take over part of the area for access to their facility but should provide at least 35 spaces.**
 - Plans have been submitted for approval, with an expectation that work will commence in June 2019.**
 - Consideration is being given to the Hub environment being a separate company under TW.**
 - Matched funding from GWR CCIF to support this project has been applied for, and other funding/sponsorship from local companies is being sought.**
 - Volunteers may be needed for the café although an existing catering companies have shown an interest.**
- A 'master plan' covering all enhancements is being prepared. Currently the following works are being considered
 - Improved access via Murray Walk.
 - Northern pedestrian access to Foundry Close (which will also provide a better interchange route with the Chippenham / Melksham buses). Although desirable, routing buses via Foundry close is not practical at present.
 - An additional signal midway between Thingley and Trowbridge to allow two trains in the same direction, or (preferred) provision of a passing loop at the station (or nearby at Broughton Gifford) sufficient for passenger trains, to be subsequently extended to a longer loop for freight trains (probably mid/late 2020s).
 - Improved subway access and making the underpass more inviting.

4. Service issues

- TW is still pressing for
 - an hourly service in each direction (by 2020) which needs a loop to provide timetable resilience.
 - A design solution for the passing loop will be needed, hopefully funded in CP6. The LEP may be able to assist but will need matched funding.
 - Extension of the route to Southampton (possibly the airport), **but the timescale for a potential service commencement is not yet known. It is not included in the December 2019 timetable.**
- The following changes are also desirable (in advance of the more frequent service)
 - Provision of trains to fill gaps, such as an additional down commuting service in the morning, and for later/earlier services (such as 5:20 and 17:20 up, 7:36 and 22:36 down) are still urgently needed
 - User requests for earlier and later trains in each direction indicate that additional passenger generation could be created at those times
 - There is a further need for later trains from Bristol/Bath to Chippenham on weekdays.
- The current rail service seems reliable, after an initial poor start in 2019. There have been few cancellations.
 - **Given the 2 hourly schedule, provision of road transport automatically (without chasing the helpdesk) is desirable.**
 - MRUG would like to keep track of any service issues, and members should report these, via the Coffee Shop or by email to info@mrug.org.uk.
- The provisional time table for 12th December 2019 onwards has a number of changes, some of which have significant implications, e.g.
 - the 17:35 ex Swindon will run earlier which could affect working commuters.
 - some connections are improved and others are less convenient.
 - there is one less train (in one direction)
- CoOp have been considering an open-access service from Taunton northwards through the TW line to Oxford and beyond for some years, as an open access service provider
 - They have arranged two meetings (at Taunton and Froome) to discuss current plans for 2 hourly service Taunton to Nottingham.
 - Provision of such a service would mean an hourly service on the TW. How this would be implemented is not clear at this time. Proposal appear to indicate a start in 2021.

5. Promotion

- Spring and summer outings to the south coast, a visit to Imber, and guided walks are provisionally scheduled.
- A 2019 Santa trip will be held, possibly running on two trains to allow additional participation.
- The MRUG website at www.mrug.org.uk.has been remodelled and now includes real-time train and bus information, and a wealth of other local information related to transport.
- A national station tidy campaign is to be held on 13th April. MRUG intend to support this at Melksham and a station briefing has been arranged for 22nd March (subsequently cancelled). Our activity may be limited to areas outside the station.

6. Finance

- A grant has been generously awarded of £300 from MWPC.

7. Other Organisations

- **TransWilts** activities have been covered elsewhere in these minutes.
 - Discussion is needed on the role of a Melksham station 'ambassador'.
- MRUG officers have agreed to apply for membership of **ACoRP** as a station 'friend'. This could open new avenues of funding to MRUG.
 - Previous membership had lapsed when TWRP was formed.
 - **ACoRP's** national conference is in March. MRUG may send a delegate.
- The **Coffee Shop** forum covers many issues of interest to Melksham rail users, and may be accessed at <http://www.firstgreatwestern.info/coffeshop/index.php>.
- **Travelwatch SW** have a bi-annual meeting in March. MRUG members include a board member of TWSW and MRUG also sends a representative to all open meetings.
- MRUG also support the activities of **Railfuture** and the **West Wilts Rail Users Group**. Hopefully we can get reports from these organisations as appropriate.
- TW and the CoffeeShop have stands at ACoRP's 'Rail in the City' event at Reading on 15th May.

8. Survey

- Melksham station usage was surveyed on 5th March.
 - Car park usage was checked before and after each train, and figures provided to TW for the finance implications of car park charging and the Hub. It was apparent that the majority of commuters who arrived by car were 'kiss and ride', and did not park all day.
 - All passengers were surveyed on their journey (destination/reason etc) and the majority were happy to provide this data.

9. AOB

- Future meetings may occasionally include a public transport speaker, e.g. BTP.
- Train times at the bus stop in the Market Place are too high to see easily.

10. Next and subsequent meetings

Wednesday 22 May 2019 at 19:30, the AGM

For advance information, meeting dates for 2019 have been set as follows. All meetings at 19:30, in Melksham Town Hall.

- Wednesday 22 May 2019 regular meeting plus AGM
- Wednesday 24 July 2019
- Wednesday 27 November 2019

Note the planned meeting in September has been cancelled.

Other provisional dates of interest to members

- 6 April 2019 - Railfuture meeting, Severnside, at Dilton Marsh
- 13 April 2019 – Station area tidy (limited to areas outside the station itself))
- 27 April 2019 -TW AGM (note: stakeholders and members only) * ticket required.
- 28 April 2019 -Trip to Seaton, for both a seaside outing and (optionally to spread John Money's ashes near the tramway). A lift is available to anyone who would like this (contact Graham Ellis).
- 20 May 2019 - TW stakeholders meeting (TW stakeholders and members only) * ticket required.
- 15 May – Community Rail in the City - Reading
- 26 June 2019 - TW conference (public invited) * ticket required.
- 29 June 2019 - Participation in Melksham carnival
- 7 July 2019 - Day trip to Weymouth by train
- 17 August 2019 - Imber bus running day
- 18 Sept 2019 - Guided walk Trowbridge to Melksham, train in one direction
- 15 December 2019 – Santa train